

Society for Range Management
University Accreditation Program Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Accreditation of university degree programs is a proven and accepted approach used by many professional societies to achieve the following objectives:

- establish recognized minimum standards that address the educational needs of students preparing to enter the profession,
- provide constructive guidance to institutions that are currently providing or are planning to provide instruction in the discipline, and
- identify programs that meet or exceed the accreditation standards.

Rangeland ecology and management programs are identified using a variety of different terminologies. For this document the acronym (REM) will be used to represent all these programs. Accreditation can be awarded to REM programs at 4-year colleges and universities: for simplicity, the term “university” is used throughout the document but applies to 4-year colleges as well.

Role and Responsibility of the Society for Range Management:

The responsibility for accreditation of professional REM education programs is accepted by the Society for Range Management (SRM) to further its stated mission “to promote the professional development and continuing education of members and the public and the stewardship of rangeland resources.” Procedures for accrediting institutions were originally adopted by the SRM Board of Directors (BOD) in July 1977. Several minor modifications were subsequently approved by the BOD prior to the major revision in 2006. The SRM accreditation criteria and the list of university programs that have been accredited are available through the SRM website at: <https://rangelands.org/committees/program-accreditation-committee/>.

Printed brochures on REM education opportunities also identify the SRM accredited REM programs.

Role and Responsibilities of the University Seeking Society for Range Management Accreditation:

A university desiring to have its REM program considered for accreditation should start the process by contacting the SRM Executive Vice President. The request for evaluation for program accreditation will usually be initiated by the REM program leader. The leader of the program being evaluated will coordinate all aspects of the review process with the Executive Vice President (EVP) or designee of SRM. SRM may assign a designee for the EVP. In places throughout the Handbook, it will be noted where the designee may substitute for the EVP. The EVP or designee will coordinate with the chair of the Program Accreditation Committee (PAC). As part of the evaluation, a visitation team (VT) impaneled by the PAC will review the program through an on-site visit. In preparation for the arrival of the VT, the program must develop a self-evaluation report which includes a thorough presentation of how well the program meets the SRM accreditation standards. The REM Program Leader or designated university representative will coordinate the meeting agenda with the VT to assure that key university administrators, faculty, students, alumni, and employers are available to meet with the VT.

This handbook includes the following information:

- SRM accreditation standards and examples of the types of information that should be included in the self-evaluation report to illustrate the degree to which each of the standards is met.
- Procedures associated with the accreditation review process.
- Criteria guiding composition of the VT and PAC and instructions to guide their activities during the review process.

SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR UNDERGRADUATE RANGELAND ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The following accreditation standards describe the features of an undergraduate REM program that is equipped to provide the depth and breadth of instruction necessary to achieve SRM formal education goals. The accreditation standards reflect a mix of quantitative and qualitative goals, therefore they are necessarily described throughout the text in somewhat general terms. Consequently, the accreditation standards are open to some interpretation and evaluation must depend on the judgment of VT, PAC, and BOD members. To aid the review process, the self-evaluation report should be organized to specifically address how each of the seven accreditation standards (below) is fulfilled by the program. Indented bullets suggest some of the types of information that should be provided to address whether each of the standards has been achieved.

Accreditation Standard I. Rangeland Ecology and Management Unit Characteristics:

The Rangeland Ecology and Management (REM) Program may exist as a traditional department or as part of an interdisciplinary academic unit (e.g. department or school). In traditional departments the REM lead will be the Department Head with duties assigned by the University but typically including hiring, tenure, promotion, budgetary allocations and resource distribution, and the curricular content, scheduling frequency, and instructor coordination of the REM and other department courses.

Mechanisms for REM program leadership are especially critical in programs, departments, or schools which contain multi-disciplinary faculty and curricula. In such programs an REM leader must be formally designated as evidenced by a memo or letter provided by an administrator at or above the department level. The leader of the REM program must at a minimum (1) be a fulltime, regular (as defined by the university) faculty member who meets the requirements under Standard IV; (2) be responsible for coordinating the REM curriculum including but not limited to service on committees that are responsible for or relate to the REM courses and curriculum; and (3) interact with others (professional advisors, faculty, administrators, and students) to offer advice on course and instructor scheduling, student advising/mentoring, and student clubs. It is recommended that the REM leader serve as chair of a committee of faculty that teach REM specific concepts courses, periodically leads this committee in discussion of curricula and related issues such as scheduling frequency and instructor coordination of the REM courses. The REM leader should be responsible for overseeing assessment of annual benchmarks for accreditation purposes (tracking number of graduates, number of majors, etc.), preparing the annual check list (Appendix Figure 1), and developing the self-evaluation report and organizing the visitation team visit for reaccreditation. Duties associated with leading the REM program must be included in the faculty member's statement of roles and expectations.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- A brief history of the REM program within the institution.
- A current statement of the goals, missions, and objectives of the REM program. In particular, these statements should reflect:
 - Explicit expressions of the education results to be achieved.
 - Sensitivity to the expanding role of the REM professional in meeting the increasingly diverse needs of society.
 - Responsiveness to the evolving needs of the constituencies which can benefit from interaction with REM professionals.
 - Awareness of the contribution of other disciplines to the REM discipline.
 - A commitment to education that will not in any way discriminate among students (e.g., demonstrate a sensitivity to race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or dependence on public assistance).
- An organization chart showing the REM program in the academic administrative structure of the university.

APPENDIX FIGURE 1.

- Description of the formal mechanism for the REM program leader to contribute to deliberations made at the most immediate superior level of the administration.
- An organization chart showing the relationship of the REM program with other environment and natural resource programs within the institution.
- Description of recent changes in program objectives and/or organizational structure. If changes have occurred, explain how and why the program has changed.
- Evaluation of the progress of the program toward achieving its objectives.
- Indication of anticipated program changes (budgets, resources, and staffing) during the next five to ten years. Explain the reasons for these anticipated changes. Evaluate the problems expected in meeting these changes, including the prospects for adequate resources to make these changes.
- Copies of the portions of the university catalog and links to the university and departmental web sites that provide information about the REM program.

Accreditation Standard II. Degree Credential:

A formal credential (e.g., B.S. degree, minor, option, certificate, concentration) that includes the word “range” or “rangeland” in the title of the credential must be offered in association with the REM program. There are many employers who have a specific need for individuals with a strong education foundation in rangeland ecology and management. The goal of this accreditation standard is to be responsive to consistent requests to the SRM from representatives of private enterprise and government that SRM work with universities to clearly identify individuals with an accredited range education by including the word “range” or “rangeland” in the title of the credential.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- Documentation from the university registrar office indicating how the range credential is formally acknowledged in transportable student records (e.g., diploma and/or official transcript).
- Documentation from the university catalog and web site explicitly stating that a formal credential in REM is available and specifying the course of study necessary to obtain the REM credential.

Accreditation Standard III. Curriculum and Advising/mentoring:

Education to prepare a REM professional requires **both** depth and breadth of insight into numerous concepts and issues. The following breadth of categories must be addressed in the curriculum. To address the issue of depth, semester credits (1 semester-system credit = 1.5 quarter-system credits) are listed to provide guidance as to the minimum suggested time of in-class and/or laboratory instruction devoted to coverage of the material. To preserve the integrity of the breadth and depth objectives, a minimum of 66 semester credits, partitioned to fulfill each of the bulleted categories listed below, need to be achieved by students receiving a formal “range” credential from an accredited REM program.

Many of the credits listed in the curriculum will likely be required by or applicable to other programs that a university might offer. It is anticipated that the REM credit requirements will often be able to be simultaneously applied to those other programs of study in the context of either electives or required courses. The objective of Accreditation Standard III is to ensure that students participating in an accredited REM program have been taught the depth and breadth of knowledge represented in the required curriculum categories.

Curriculum

The subject matter that should be covered within an accredited REM program include the following:

General Concepts

- Biology (4 credits)
- Chemistry (4 credits)
- Soil Science (4 credits)
- Plant Taxonomy (3 credits, should include elements of both sight identification, plant classification and keying)
- Quantitative Concepts (9 credits)
 - Examples:
 - Mathematics (college algebra or higher)
 - Statistical Methods
 - Geographic Information Science
 - Remote Sensing
 - Natural Resource Modeling
- Integrated Natural Sciences (9 credits) Examples:
 - Ecology
 - Plant Physiology
 - Animal Physiology/Nutrition/Behavior
 - Biogeochemistry/Environmental Chemistry
 - Soil Genesis and Classification
 - Conservation Biology
 - Hydrology
 - Environmental Chemistry
- Resource Management (9 credits) Examples:
 - Watershed Management
 - Forestry Management
 - Wildlife Management
 - Wildland Recreation Management
 - Farm/Ranch Management
 - Fire Management
 - Integrated Pest Management
- Economics (3 credits)
- Communication (3 credits) Examples: Speaking
 - Writing
 - Listening

Rangeland Ecology and Management Specific Concepts

(18 REM specific credits that are in addition to the General Concept instruction described above)

The REM specific credits are expected to compliment and build upon the general concept credit categories listed above.

The following subject categories should be covered:

- Introduction to Rangeland Ecology and Management (This course should emphasize rangelands and basic principles of rangeland ecology and management, including an introduction to topics such as: definitions of rangelands; the history of range management; major biophysical characteristics and the distribution of rangeland ecosystems; rangeland plant morphology and physiology; rangeland ecology; rangeland inventory and monitoring; livestock grazing management; vegetation management and rangeland restoration; and watershed and riparian area management. For example, see content covered in Holechek et al. [2011]. Holechek, J. L., R. D. Pieper, and C. H. Herbel. 2011. *Range Management: Principles and Practices*. Sixth Edition. Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle, New Jersey.)
- Applied Rangeland Ecology (including developing an appreciation of the spectrum of considerations that are part of recognizing healthy rangeland communities, maintaining healthy rangeland {including all elements determining sustainable use targets} and an awareness of the structure and function dynamics of rangelands {e.g., multiple state-and-transition succession ecology considerations}).
- Inventory and Assessment Methods (quantitative and qualitative assessment of plant communities, land management units, application of spatial analytical skills (e.g., mapping/GPS/GIS/remote sensing, application of mathematics and statistics to quantify trends and sustainable use targets).
- Vegetation/Habitat Management Techniques (instruction to provide a “toolbox” of methods based on scientific insights that can be used to craft solutions responsive to unique challenges (e.g., fire and grazing management; restoration practices; weed management; watershed management; riparian management)).
- Rangeland Management Planning and Problem Solving (including elements of team projects and should assess the mastery of the process of solving natural resource problems, taking into account ecological, social, government policy, and economic contexts, and the use of inquiry, analytical, integrative/synthetic, and communication skills).

Woven throughout the REM specific coursework there should be evidence that instruction is cultivating professional development (including elements devoted to ethics/professionalism), consideration of relevant environmental laws and policy (including, for example, awareness of the rangeland management implications of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act), and an appreciation of, human dimension considerations to management (development of collaborative management/negotiation skills). Technical writing skills should be consistently strengthened throughout the REM specific coursework.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- A syllabus for each of the courses that are commonly used to meet the General Concepts curriculum standards.
- A syllabus and a sample of previous year’s tests and/or assignments for each of the courses used to meet the Rangeland Ecology and Management Specific Concepts curriculum standards. The VT, PAC and BOD will rely on the syllabi/outlines of courses to determine depth of coverage of material; therefore, the syllabi/outlines should specify the number of instructor contact hours devoted to the various materials covered by the class.

Advising/mentoring

Each student pursuing the REM program should have an assigned academic advisor/mentor.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- Discussion of the advising/mentoring protocol.
- How are students matched with advisors/mentors?
- How do advisors/mentors keep abreast of new information germane to the progress of the student?

- What criteria are used to guide advisors/mentors regarding course substitutions and/or decisions about which courses fulfill the intent of the General Concepts curriculum categories? For example, many courses may not explicitly express a Resource Management or Integrated Natural Science emphasis even though they provide substantive content relevant to these considerations. Coursework flexibility, facilitated by guidance provided by advisors/mentors to students, is a very important element of the General Concepts curriculum goals of REM accreditation. Therefore, advisors/mentors should have some shared approach for how they decide which courses meet the intent of these broad concept categories.
- What is the mechanism in place to ensure that each student meets with their advisor/mentor at least twice a year to discuss academic progress and professional development?

Accreditation Standard IV. Rangeland Ecology and Management Educators:

The number and caliber of the faculty is fundamental to the delivery of a quality education. It also reflects the emphasis placed by the institution on rangeland ecology and management education. The instructors of the REM-specific courses should have career records that demonstrate an active involvement in the development of the rangeland management profession through 1) their record of membership/service to the SRM and 2) their record of expanding the scientific and/or education capability of the profession as evidenced by periodically publishing articles in peer-reviewed venues that specifically target communication with members of the profession, in particular the Rangeland Ecology and Management journal or Rangelands.

The 18 REM credits (Accreditation Standard III) must be taught by at least 3 different Ph.D. faculty members. This purposely does not say anything about FTE, funding source, official appointments, or where faculties are located administratively within the institution. The basic idea is that there is value in receiving instruction from different people who will offer students different insights and viewpoints. This also does not preclude some of the 18 REM credits being taught by someone with less than a Ph.D. under supervision of a Ph.D.

Qualifying faculty members are defined as persons for whom all of the following are true:

- a) Possess a doctoral degree in range management/science or other applied science disciplines directly related to rangeland ecology and management.
- b) Serve as REM program lead or have teaching assignments under the administrative control or oversight of the REM program leader or under the oversight of a program leader assigned by the university to conduct an interdisciplinary REM program.
- c) Have substantive teaching assignments in courses contributing to the five rangeland ecology and management specific areas within the curriculum, as specified under Standard III.

Qualifying faculty may be appointed in academic units of the parent institution other than that housing the REM program if they meet the above requirements, but in all cases must hold at least partial or adjunct appointments in the latter unit and be subject to appropriate administrative oversight from the range teaching program leader for their contributions to the five professional areas of the range curriculum. *The goal is that of offering quality education in relevant subject areas by an appropriate number and diversity of qualified faculty.*

Faculty teaching REM courses should exhibit (1) a diversity of backgrounds, (2) substantial professional experience in range management, (3) terminal degrees from a variety of institutions, (4) competence in the assigned areas of specialization, (5) enthusiasm, ability and effectiveness in teaching, (6) aptitude for working closely with students and stimulating independent thinking, (7) close and continuing liaison with the range profession, and (8) efforts to stay abreast of new developments. Participation by the faculty in appropriate professional, scientific, and scholarly endeavors is essential.

The program should demonstrate that it attaches a high priority to quality teaching by its appointments and promotions, by its responsiveness to changes within the profession and in teaching methods, by its provision of a positive and effective environment for learning, by recognizing, valuing, and supporting human diversity, and by profiting from student evaluation of faculty performance. Faculty members who have achieved excellence in teaching should be recognized and rewarded.

Workloads and responsibilities should be allocated according to the interests and competence of individual faculty members and should be such that quality of instruction can be maintained at a high level. Work assignments should take into account the time needed by the faculty for student counseling, institutional and professional activities, and self-improvement.

Class sizes and student:teacher ratios within courses should be structured and adjusted as appropriate to specific subject matter taught, with a view of enhancing the learning process of students. Similarly, quality counseling and mentoring of undergraduate students should be provided through student: advisor ratios that are not excessive and through assurance of student counseling by faculty who are qualified to provide competent, dedicated advisement in rangeland ecology and management.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include information on the credentials of the REM-specific instructors including:

- Curriculum Vitae of the faculty teaching the REM-specific courses and who advise REM program students. These CV's should at minimum include the following sections:
 - Degree titles/dates/awarding universities.
 - Brief summary of past experience.
 - Summary of current formal job appointment identifying the percentage of time assigned to teaching, research, extension, service, advising, and administration. The titles of the courses and the frequency that courses are taught should be specified. The number of undergraduate advisees should be listed.
 - Honors/Awards.
 - List of teaching responsibilities (e.g., course titles, frequency that courses are taught, enrollment for each time each class was taught over the last five years, number of student advisees by year over the last five years)
 - List of selected refereed scientific journal publications and indicate the total number.
 - List of selected other publications and indicate the total number.
 - Summary of graduate student advisees.
 - Summary of extension and outreach activities.
 - List of service activities.
- A summary table listing faculty teaching, mentoring, and advising responsibilities for all teaching participants of the REM program.
- Description of the role of administrative policies/practices in cultivating excellence in education. In particular:
- Discuss policies/practices designed to keep professional educators in touch with practicing rangeland managers and employers of range managers (e.g., professional consulting, participation in professional and scientific meetings, participation in extension/outreach efforts, and participation in multi-disciplinary team research).
- Discuss policies/practices/programs designed to enhance teaching skills (e.g., specialized instruction for teachers) or enhance/develop new perspective (e.g., sabbatical leave). Evaluate the level of participation, adequacy, and effectiveness of these programs for the current faculty.
- A list of other faculty categories (e.g., affiliate and adjunct professors), provide a brief CV for each and explain how these individuals are used to contribute to program goals, objectives, and teaching.
- A list of the number of teaching assistants and/or lecturer positions normally available and explain how they are used.
- A list of vacant positions now authorized and for which funds are available. Indicate the dates that current open positions were vacated and the dates when the vacated positions were authorized to be filled and, if applicable, the current status of the searches.
- Description of how the research, extension/outreach, service appointments of the range faculty are used to compliment the teaching and advising objectives of the program.

Accreditation Standard V. Extracurricular Professional Development:

Each program should have a student organization, advised by a faculty member, which focuses on professional development of future rangeland scientists/managers (e.g., range club). Participation in section and international SRM meetings should be encouraged and to some degree financially supported by the program.

To aid in assessment of this standard the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- Summary of the on-campus club structure, student membership, and activities by year over the last five years.
- Summary of the last five years the number of undergraduates who attended annual section and national meetings and the mode of their participation in the meetings (attendance of technical sessions, participation in Plant ID, URME, speaking contest).
- Description of the amount and mechanism of financial support obtained by REM students to help undergraduates participate in professional society meetings.
- Description of how information about professional development is conveyed to students, including the values of membership in a professional society such as SRM. List the membership of REM students in SRM and on campus academic societies (e.g., Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Alpha Zeta).
- Description of the mechanisms in place by which students are informed/aided in pursuit of seasonal or permanent job advertisement (include the efforts of the REM program, the College and the University in assisting students with job placement).
- Summary of the resources available for aiding recruiting efforts and professional development (include the efforts of the REM program, the College, and the University).
- Explanation of how internship opportunities are cultivated with employers and advertised to student.
- Explanation of how research opportunities are cultivated with faculty and advertised to students.

Accreditation Standard VI. Assessment of Courses/Program Effectiveness:

The REM program leader will be responsible for coordinating periodic assessment of effectiveness of the courses and the overall program. The REM program leader will also be responsible for coordinating how this feedback is used to strengthen/refine the program.

Documentation associated with these assessment efforts is required by the accreditation review panel to assess the above curricular issues. **The suggested assessment activities that should be periodically tracked by the REM program leader in close consultation with the range faculty, and summarized in the self-evaluation document should include:**

- A curriculum map showing how key concepts/skills acquired in the “general concept” and “rangeland ecology and management specific concept” coursework build upon each other in a complimentary way as the student progresses through the program.
- Student questionnaire evaluation summaries of the effectiveness of delivery of information for each of the REM-specific courses.
- A qualitative summary of annual exit interviews with graduating seniors conducted to determine their overall perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program. A summary of what the students will be doing upon graduation should also be provided (e.g., broad employment categories, graduate school).
- Survey results of students at different stages of their degree program (this need not be surveyed every year, but should be structured to be conducted a couple times a decade). These surveys should be designed to obtain feedback on advising, complimentary of courses progression, skill development.
- Survey results of alumni with regard to their assessment of what was particularly valuable, what was not, and what they wish they had more preparation through their education experience (this need not be surveyed every year, but should be structured to be conducted a couple times a decade).
- Survey results of employers of alumni with regard to their perceived strengths and weaknesses of the products of the undergraduate education program (this need not be surveyed every year, but should be structured to be conducted a couple times a decade).

APPENDIX FIGURE 1.

- Mechanisms outlined and examples provided by the program leader as to how the feedback from the students and other constituent groups are tangibly integrated into operation of the program.
- Description of student recruitment activities.
- Description of academic standards for admission, retention, and graduation from the REM program.
- Summary of the patterns of student progress through the program (e.g., average length of time to degree, the percentage of students who enter the REM that graduate, what is the net increase/decrease to the program associated with students transferring programs).
- Summary of the analyses of students' academic records (GPA of range graduates compared to GPA of college graduates in other programs).
- Identification and evaluation of the relative importance of the sources of ideas for progress in the educational program (e.g., administration, faculty, students, alumni, employers).
- Total current enrollment by curriculum and class in the REM program. Include graduate students and identifiable pre-REM students.
- A table or graph indicating the number of REM graduates, by major or option, for at least the last five years.
- Summary of the employment record for recent REM graduates. □ Information on non-majors taking REM courses.

Accreditation Standard VII. University Credentials and Support:

The SRM accreditation process does not examine the total university; however, it does require that the institution be accepted by its regional accrediting agency. Also, there must be evidence that the institution has the capacity/commitment to provide consistent base support for a quality education program.

To aid in assessment of this standard, the self-evaluation report could include such items as:

- Documentation that the institution is accepted by its regional accrediting agency.
- Description of how the institutional capacity/commitment is sufficient for providing consistent base support for a quality education program. In particular, the report should address the adequacy of:
 - library services (e.g., paper and electronic access to scientific publication resources relevant to range education)
 - classroom, laboratory, and field instruction facilities
 - hiring and retention of core REM faculty (salary competitiveness may be illustrated by comparing with a national/regional summary of salary for faculty grades in similar disciplines, e.g., the annual national survey entitled “Oklahoma State University Faculty Salary Survey” tracks salary information in universities by discipline, region, and employment title),
 - use of tenure of and promotion criteria with feedback loops that support excellence in education
 - offices
 - staff support

PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITING INSTITUTIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF PROFESSIONAL RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

The first step in the process associated with making an initial application for accreditation (1a) is slightly different than for re-accreditation (1b). After the first step, the accreditation procedures are the same (items 2-15 below).

1a) Procedure for an initial application for accreditation:

A program is eligible to make an initial application for accreditation if it:

- Offers a curriculum which meets standards set forth in this document and
- Has offered a similar curriculum for five years.

If these criteria have been met, the REM Program Leader sends a letter to the EVP at least six (6) months prior to a proposed on-site visit indicating that, having studied the current STANDARDS and PROCEDURES and consulted with the appropriate members of the University Administration; the institution desires an accreditation examination and is ready to prepare the confidential self-evaluation report. In response, the EVP or designee will send a letter to the institution's identified administrative officer and the REM Program leader specifying that the costs of the review will be an application fee set by the Board of Directors (\$3,000. US), the actual travel expenses of the VT, and any costs associated with preparing the documentation for the VT review. In addition, if the program is accredited, there will be an Annual Accreditation fee of \$300 US. The letter will include the web address through which the Accreditation Standards can be accessed. The SRM recommends that the on-site review by the VT should be scheduled while classes are in session. The letter shall request that the institution's identified administrative officer or their designated representative respond to the EVP six (6) months prior to the proposed on-site review. The Chair of the PAC and the EVP or designee are available to answer questions and provide advice regarding preparation of the report.

1b) Procedure for re-accreditation:

If an institution is already accredited, the first re-accreditation review normally occurs five years after the initial accreditation. Subsequent re-accreditation reviews normally follow at 10-year intervals. The BOD may request an interim examination if the Annual Report indicates that there is a significant downsizing of faculty numbers or significant changes in courses and curriculum that bring into question whether the program is still capable of meeting the Accreditation Standards. This interim review would follow re-accreditation procedures outlined below.

- 1b_i)** At least 18 months before a re-accreditation decision is due, the SRM EVP shall write the current REM program leader of the institution to remind the leader that a re-accreditation deadline is approaching. If the REM Program Leader indicates they would like to proceed, the EVP writes to the institution's chief administrative officer (sending copies of the letter to the REM Program Leader and PAC Chair) advising of the time necessary to prepare self-evaluation reports and the costs associated with the review (accreditation application fee (\$3,000), VT travel, and , if approved an annual accreditation fee (\$300)). The letter will include the web address through which the Accreditation Standards can be accessed. The letter shall request that the institution's identified administrative officer respond to the EVP six (6) months prior to the proposed on-site visit.
- 1b_{ii})** The letter should also ask if any circumstances might warrant postponement of the re-examination. If a postponement by the REM Program Leader or identified administrative officer is sought, the EVP is empowered to postpone the re-accreditation review if extenuating circumstances warrant. The EVP should keep the BOD and the PAC apprised, in writing, regarding the postponement and rationale for the decision. Normally, postponement will not be considered beyond two (2) years.

Steps 2-14 apply to initial application and re-accreditation:

- 2) REM Program Leader initiates self-evaluation study in time to submit the completed report at least one month prior to the on-site visit. The on-site visit should occur during the fall or spring semester when classes are in session.
- 3) The institution's identified administrative officer or designated representative writes to the EVP formally requesting an accreditation review at least six (6) months prior to the proposed on-site visit.
- 4) Following the request for accreditation review by the institution and four (4) months prior to site visit, the REM Program Leader communicates with PAC Chair informing of the site visit dates. PAC Chair and REM Program Leader agree to draft on-site visit schedule.
- 5) A VT is appointed by the PAC Chair in consultation with the EVP or designee, the PAC members, and the REM Program Leader of the institution being reviewed. PAC Chair will inform EVP and PAC members of the VT membership when final.
- 6) The VT Chair advises the REM Program Leader on the details of the on-campus visit including persons to be interviewed (students, faculty, administrative officers, alumni, and employers of alumni). The VT Chair and the REM Program Leader, in consultation with the PAC Chair makes sure the VT spends at least two full days on campus while the institution is in session. To accommodate the review process, the timing of the VT meetings should not conflict with major events that would inhibit the VT's need to visit with students, faculty, administrative officers, alumni, and employers of alumni.
- 7) One month before the on-campus visit, the REM Program Leader provides the EVP or designee with one paper and one digital (pdf format) copy of the self-evaluation report. The report will be distributed to the VT, PAC chair, and all members of the PAC. The REM Program Leader marks the report "CONFIDENTIAL", and it is treated as such by all parties involved.
- 8) At the conclusion of the site visit, before leaving the campus, the VT will provide a preliminary oral report to the University administrator(s), REM Program leader, and REM Faculty.
- 9) Within one month after the visit, the VT Chair submits the VT report to the university's identified administrative officer with copies to the REM Program Leader, VT, PAC Chair, and EVP or designee. The facts of the report will be checked with representatives of the program as necessary. It must be recognized by all that the VT report reflects the evaluation, synthesis, and judgment of the VT only (i.e., the BOD speaks for the SRM on accreditation decisions, with the VT and PAC offering their perspectives to help the BOD have the full range of information it needs to make an accreditation decision).
- 10) Within two weeks after receiving the VT report, the REM Program Leader is requested to provide written comment on the report's factual accuracy, after consulting with the identified administrative officer, to the EVP, VT, and PAC Chair.
- 11) In the week following receipt of the REM Program Leader's comments (or after a two week window has elapsed for response by the identified university representative) the EVP or designee will send copies of the VT report and comments from the identified administrative officer to the PAC members and BOD.
- 12) Within 30 days after receiving the VT report, the PAC will meet (may be phone or web meeting) with the VT chair to review and discuss the VT report, the comments of the identified administrative officer and the school's self-evaluation report. The REM Program Leader should be available to be contacted to clarify issues that may arise during this meeting. At the end of this meeting the PAC votes to recommend to the BOD that the accreditation application be granted or denied. The PAC member who was on the VT drafts a report to the Board with a supporting summary and specific PAC recommendations for BOD consideration.
- 13) The PAC chair presents an oral and written recommendation to the BOD at its next scheduled meeting.
- 14) The BOD votes to grant or withhold accreditation. If the accreditation application is approved the BOD sets the effective dates in accordance with SRM bylaws, namely: "In establishing effective dates of accreditation, the initiation date shall coincide with the date of the BOD decision, and the terminating date shall be June 30 of the terminal year as set by the Board." The normal period for accreditation is five years after the first time a program has been accredited and ten years after subsequent accreditations. However, the BOD may request a shorter-than-normal interval for re-examination to

APPENDIX FIGURE 1.

monitor progress on deficiencies that were not enough to prevent accreditation but were identified as items that needed to be rectified. This review would follow all specified re-accreditation procedures.

- 15) As soon as possible (within one week) after the BOD decision, SRM President provides verbal notification of the BOD decision to the REM Program Leader. As soon as possible after this courtesy notification, the SRM President will send by registered express mail a formal letter providing notification of the BOD accreditation decision to the identified administrative officer of the institution. Copies of the letter are sent to the REM Program Leader and the regional university accrediting association, as well as to the PAC and VT. Notice of a positive accreditation decision is provided to the public in the next available edition of *Rangeland News or RangeFlash*, posted on the SRM website, and through other methods as appropriate.

Records of essential documents generated throughout both initial accreditation and re-accreditation processes will be archived in electronic (pdf format) and paper copy by the SRM Headquarters/Business Office. These documents are treated as confidential and serve as a permanent record of all stages of these processes. Access to the documents may be obtained by select parties (PAC Chair, PAC members, BOD members, VT members, REM Program Leader, and members of SRM BOD) in preparation for or during subsequent re-accreditation reviews or appeals. A written request for access to documentation must be submitted to and approved by the EVP or designee.

Essential documents generated during the accreditation and re-accreditation processes include: 1) Initial application for accreditation (e.g., letter from REM Program Leader requesting review, response letter from EVP); 2) communications between EVP and REM Program Leader initiating re-accreditation process (e.g. notification letter from EVP to REM Program Leader, letter from EVP to university administration officer or EVP notification of postponement to BOD and PAC); 3) formal request for review from university administrative officer; 4) self-evaluation report; 5) VT final report to BOD and PAC; 6) PAC summary report and recommendations to BOD; 7) BOD decision statement; 8) formal notification letter from SRM president to university administrative officer.

Additional essential documents may include items associated with appeals and annual reports (described below).

Appeal of accreditation decision:

If an institution is denied accreditation, it may appeal the decision of the BOD by writing to the SRM President and requesting a review. The request for the review must be made within 30 days after the institution receives formal written notice of the denial. The institution then has 15 days to file with the BOD a written statement of the grounds for its request. The review will be conducted at the next scheduled BOD meeting after receipt of the appeal letter specifying the grounds for reconsideration. The institution will receive a notice at least one month before the date of the BOD review and an accompanying invitation to be present for input during part of the review process.

During the review, the institution may present testimony, written documents, and any other appropriate evidence and argument. It may not be represented by an attorney. It may request the VT chair and the PAC Chair to explain items of concern in the VT report and the recommendation of the PAC. The request for clarification from either or both of the chairs shall be made in the Statement of Grounds for review. The institution's expenses at the review are its own responsibility. The Society's expenses of the review are its own responsibility.

In addition to considering the evidence introduced at the review by the applicant institution, the BOD considers the institution's self-evaluation report, the VT's report and any other material upon which the PAC based its recommendation. The BOD shall issue a written statement of its decision in the review, including the facts and reasons that are the basis for its decision, within 30 days after the review. The BOD's statement shall be published in the next available issue of *Rangeland News* regardless of the outcome.

Re-application for accreditation after denial:

If an institution is denied accreditation, the institution must provide evidence that they have corrected the deficiencies identified by the VT, PAC, and BOD before reapplying for re-accreditation. When the REM Program leader feels that they have addressed the deficiencies, they may reapply for accreditation by writing to the EVP expressing their desire for an accreditation review (i.e., reinitiating the process beginning at 1a above).

Annual Report and Annual Accreditation Fee

Accredited programs are expected to continually meet the minimum standards for accreditation in the period between accreditation and subsequent re-accreditations. REM Program Leaders of accredited programs (or their designee) are expected to submit an **Annual Report** (APPENDIX FIGURE 1, page 18) to verify whether the ability of the program to meet each of the seven accreditation standards has changed. Detailed explanations of any significant changes are to be attached to the checklist at the time of submission.

The request for the **Annual Report** along with an invoice for the **Annual Accreditation Fee** (\$300 US) will be sent by the SRM Business Office, via regular mail, to REM Program Leaders of Accredited Programs by September 1 of each year. The annual report form can also be downloaded from the PAC page of the SRM web site (<https://rangelands.org/committees/program-accreditation-committee/>).

The completed annual report checklist should be submitted electronically to the EVP by October 15.

The EVP will forward the annual reports, plus any additional documentation, to the PAC Chair by November 1. The PAC will review these documents and determine no later than December 15 whether reported changes should trigger a re-accreditation review, or whether additional information is needed.

The PAC Chair will forward the PAC recommendations to the EVP and BOD by December 20.

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE AND VISITATION TEAM CRITERIA

Program Accreditation Committee Appointment Criteria:

The PAC shall consist of nine members. Each year three members are appointed for a three-year term by the SRM First Vice-President. Accreditation of university range management programs can be successful only if the process and procedures are carried out by recognized peers. For this reason, the panel shall have a composition of at least five members of university faculty with the rank of associate professor or higher from accredited REM programs. Two members of the PAC will be from a federal land management or research agency, or non-governmental organization. Two members of the PAC will be from a non-accredited university with a rangeland or natural resource program. It is recommended that the incoming president seek advice from current PAC members for new appointees. Appointments to the PAC shall be made on a staggered basis so that three members are appointed annually. In the case of an unfinished term of office, the SRM president will appoint a successor who will complete the term. A panel member may serve for more than one term.

The chair of the PAC is appointed by the SRM president; the incoming chair must have at least one year of experience as a PAC member. The chair may serve for more than one year if that is the desire of the successive SRM presidents.

Duties of the PAC Chair include:

- Consult with the EVP on matters concerning Visitation Team composition,
- Consult with the VT Chair and REM Program Leader concerning logistics of site visits,
- Coordinate reviews of accredited program annual reports, and
- Schedule and preside over PAC meetings.

Visitation Team Appointment Criteria:

The VT shall be composed of four SRM members appointed by the PAC chair in consultation with the PAC members and the leader of the program to be reviewed. The composition of the VT shall include two associate or full professors from an REM Program (at least one of those from a SRM Accredited Program), one non-academic with knowledge and interest in academic range management programs, and the EVP (or designee) who shall serve as a non-voting member of the VT. At least one member of the PAC must be part of the four-person VT. The PAC chair will designate who will serve as the VT chair. The VT chair must have had previous VT experience. It is strongly recommended that at least one of the other VT members should also have had previous VT experience.

Members of the visitation team do not receive honoraria, although charges to cover travel expenses are made against the school for the visitation. The Chair of the visitation team should provide each member with expense account forms regularly used by the SRM, and these should be submitted to the Society as soon as practicable following the visit. The EVP will then reimburse the VT members and bill the institution for the total travel expense of the VT.

Instructions for the Visitation Team:

The primary role of the VT is to develop a report to the PAC on the strengths and weaknesses of the program. This report will be based on 1) the self-evaluation report prepared by the program being reviewed and 2) the on-campus visit by the VT. The purposes of the visit are to:

- Create a review environment where there is an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experience among the VT and program participants, with the discussion targeted at providing an ultimate benefit for the visited institution.
- Help the institution and the program to constructively assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the current and future prospects for the REM program.
- Verify the accuracy of the materials presented in the self-evaluation reports relative to the accreditation standards.
- Assess, both quantitatively and qualitatively, factors that cannot be documented in the written reports but can nonetheless have an important role in the success of the program for good or bad. Some of these items are: intellectual atmosphere, the morale and professionalism of the faculty and staff, the caliber of the student body, the culture of the interactions/attitudes between administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni and potential employers of students.

Discussions should always maintain a friendly, constructive, professional demeanor (i.e., the visit is never to have the tone of a prosecutorial inquisition).

A necessary element of any successful accreditation program is that the review process be conducted with consistency and transparency. Therefore, each member of the VT will read the accreditation standards outlined in this document prior to initiating the review and will strongly adhere to making oral and written comments in light of how well the applicant program meets the accreditation standards in this document. It is **not** the role of the VT to offer comment on whether the program should be accredited! Rather, the VT provides to the PAC a verification of the self-evaluation report and corroborative insights gleaned from the site visit as to what the program is doing and how well the program is doing it.

Procedures During the Visitation Team Campus Visit:

Each member of the VT should receive the self-evaluation report and all supporting documents at least two weeks in advance of the campus visit. Each member of the visitation team should assume the responsibility of reading these materials prior to the start of the site visit. Analysis of the self-evaluation report prior to the visit should be useful in helping to fine-tune the itinerary for the visit. The VT chair should use the initial impressions of the VT to advise the program leader as early as possible in advance of the visit which topics the VT wishes to look at in most detail and the priority and approximate amount of time to be spent on the various elements of the review.

The VT customarily spends two to three days at the institution. An example itinerary for a typical VT visit to campus follows:

Evening prior to campus meetings:

The visitation team should try to meet the evening before the on-campus appointments to discuss final visit itinerary and logistics. A tentative work plan should be developed and, if desirable, assignments should be made regarding specific tasks to members of the committee to aid efficient fulfillment of the VT responsibilities. During parts of the visitation days the team may split up if the team chair finds that necessary to accomplish the visitation tasks.

The morning of the first day

The members of the team should meet early with the REM program leader to review logistics and be briefed on any unique sensitivities that may come up during the course of the visit. If logistics allow this brief introductory meeting could be followed by a brief introduction to key administrators within the university (these introductory visits have often been handled effectively at a breakfast meeting).

Events scheduled for the first day or morning of the second day:

- Meet alone with the program leader.
- Meet individually (or in small subgroups depending upon the size of the program) with REM faculty.
- Meet with faculty from units providing general concept classes in support of REM program.
- Tour the support facilities (e.g., library, computer facilities, and laboratories)
- Visit alone with the REM students (this is often best done if the meeting occurs over lunch with free food to the students to encourage attendance and a more relaxed atmosphere).
- Meet alone with staff.
- Meet alone with teaching assistants/lecturers.
- Meet alone with recent graduates (if possible).
- Meet alone with employers (if possible).

The evening of the first day:

The VT should meet either for dinner or immediately thereafter so that individual members can review/cross-check their findings in the context of perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the program. Any perceived discrepancies between the self-evaluation report and the information gleaned from the various meetings during the day should be discussed.

The second day:

The agenda for the morning and early afternoon of this day should have more flexibility built into than on the first day, so that the team has the latitude to follow-up on issues that may have emerged the previous day. Time should be scheduled for the afternoon of this day for the team to begin to draft the items that will go into the VT report.

The morning of the third day or end of second day:

Meet with program leader, REM faculty, and upper administrators of the university to review the VT perceptions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It has been the experience of past VT's that these exit meetings are more productive if the VT meets with each of these groups separately.

The visit should conclude no later than noon of the third day.

The Visitation Team Report:

The VT report should include an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each of the seven standards for accreditation (pp. 4-11). For directions and details of procedures and timeline, see Procedures for Accrediting Institutions for the Teaching of Professional Rangeland Management (pp. 12-15). The VT should provide a statement regarding how well the program is meeting each standard. This may be included at the end of each standard or as a final statement in the report.

SRM ACCREDITED PROGRAMS ANNUAL CHECKLIST TO ASSESS NEED FOR A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE REPORT

Society for Range Management Accreditation Panel

This annual checklist is to be submitted to the SRM Executive Vice President,
SRM Central Office by October 15.

(Use the Tab and Shift-Tab to navigate between fields)	
Name of Institution:	
Name of Accredited or Recognized Program:	
<u>REM Program Lead:</u>	
Name:	
Title:	
Address:	
City/State/Zip	
Work Phone:	
Email:	

Signature, REM Program Leader	Date
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Mail or email completed form to:
SRM Executive Vice-President
ATTN: Annual Accreditation Substantive Change Report
8918 W 21st St N, Suite 200, #286
Wichita, KS 67205
 or
evp@rangelands.org

Checklist

(Click the appropriate box in the right-hand column)

Name of Institution:		
Standard I. <u>REM Unit Characteristics:</u> Have there been any changes in the structure of the administrative unit in which the REM program exists, or in the capacity of the REM program leader to serve the REM unit?	*YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NONE <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard II. <u>Degree Credential:</u> Have there been any changes in the name of the degree or major?	*YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard III. <u>Curriculum and Advising:</u> Have there been any changes in the curriculum required to satisfy degree requirements? Have there been any changes in advising?	*YES <input type="checkbox"/> *YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard IV. <u>REM Educators:</u> Are the 18 REM credits described in Accreditation Standard III taught by a least 3 different PhD faculty members? Do the qualifying faculty who teach the 18 REM credits hold at least partial or adjunct appointments in the REM unit? Do the qualifying faculty who teach the 18 REM credits represent diverse backgrounds as described in Accreditation Standard IV in the Program Accreditation Handbook?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO* <input type="checkbox"/> NO* <input type="checkbox"/> NO* <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard V. <u>Extracurricular Professional Development:</u> Does the program have a student organization (Range Club) that focuses on professional development?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO* <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard VI. <u>Assessment of Courses/Program Effectiveness.</u> Does the REM program leader coordinate periodic assessment of the effectiveness of courses and the overall program, and is this information used to strengthen/refine the program?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO* <input type="checkbox"/>
Standard VII. <u>University Credentials and Support</u> Have there been any changes to the institution's accreditation or commitment to support to the REM program?	*YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>* Provide a detailed explanation of the nature of changes indicated above when questions were answered with a response marked by an asterisk. The attached explanation should quickly and convincingly demonstrate and document the program's conformance with the relevant standard <u>or</u> acknowledge the need for a Substantive Change Report to be completed.</p>		